

Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

New Visitor Center and Headquarters



A rendering of the new "green" building. Courtesy of C&S Companies.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service received \$9.775 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding to construct a visitor center and headquarters for the Long Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The new energy-efficient facility, located at Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge in Shirley, N.Y., will be a hub for 10 national wildlife refuge areas located within a 125-mile area on Long Island.

The 17,000 square-foot building will include interactive exhibits, a multi-purpose room for programs and meetings, and other visitor services. It will also provide office space for refuge complex employees, other Service programs, and partner organizations. The new facility is expected to open in Fall 2011.

As a natural resource agency, the Service strives to model the way for "green" government. The Long Island building will meet U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver-level certification criteria for sustainability and energy efficiency. For example:

- A geothermal pump system will minimize the use of fossil fuels in heating and cooling the building by circulating water regulated by the Earth's constant temperature of 50 to 60°F ten feet below its surface.
- Storm water will be managed using permeable pavement and retention basins to prevent run-off and to be used to water native plant gardens.
- Solar panels will generate a portion of the building's electricity.

T.G. Nickel & Associates, a Long Island company based in Ronkonkoma, N.Y., will construct the building. C&S Companies of Syracuse, N.Y., completed the architectural and engineering design, and Lyons/Zaremba, Inc. of Boston, Mass., will design and produce the exhibits for the building.

The refuge complex's current headquarters building at Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge is a former hunting lodge built in 1905. The tiny building provides insufficient space for current staff and inadequate facilities to host refuge visitors. It is plagued with safety and health hazards. To accommodate refuge staff, two houses on the refuge have been converted into office space. Both of these buildings will revert back to refuge housing once the new center is completed.



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The site being prepared for the new building

In the fall of 2006, the Service completed a 15-year comprehensive conservation plan for the refuge complex. Local governments, conservation organizations, refuge neighbors and other interested individuals were involved in the process, which identified the need for the new administrative and visitor facility, among other management goals.

The national wildlife refuges on Long Island are located within an hour drive of more than 7.5 million people. They provide important habitat for migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, and other wildlife. From rare grasslands to maritime tidal areas, the habitats are rich and diverse. In addition to Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge, other units include Amagansett, Conscience Point, Gardiner's Point Island, Lido Beach, Morton, Oyster Bay, Sayville, Seatuck, and Target Rock national wildlife refuges.

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May 2010

